

new york minute

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LEAD NY: Cultivating New Leaders for the Food & Agriculture Industry

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What is LEAD NY?

The New York State food and agricultural system benefits from strong leadership at every level. As fewer people are involved in the production of food, many begin to take a seemingly endless food supply for granted. With this decreasing knowledge of how food systems work, it has become more crucial for the industry to clearly communicate its needs, participate in policy formulation, and interact with stakeholders such as consumers and local and state elected officials. This requires strong leadership, developed from within the ranks of the food and agricultural industry.

"The emerging take-home lesson for me is the vital role networking plays in becoming a great leader. Networking helps in the business environment and is essential in becoming an active leader in my community, especially local government. The networks gained through LEAD class members, alumni, and session speakers are priceless. The contacts made through the LEAD experience allow me to become a better leader and an active member of my community." Susan Dingee (Class 12)

The Empire State Food and Agricultural Leadership Institute (LEAD New York) has recently joined the Community & Regional Development Institute (CaRDI) to enhance its expertise in leadership training, a critical element for successful community and regional development. LEAD NY is a well-established, two-year program of seminars, workshops and field travel designed to inspire and develop leaders for the food and agricultural industry. It is a rigorous program that emphasizes the development of communication, leadership and networking skills, studies public policymaking, enhances issue evaluation and problem-solving techniques, and enhances social capital. Many of the industry's most influential leaders - including growers, lenders, shippers, retailers, educators, marketers, agency heads, consultants and others - have successfully completed the LEAD NY program.

What are the objectives?

LEAD NY's goals can be identified in three broad categories:

1. To improve participants' leadership skills and behavior, including:
 - Public speaking, written communication, and effective listening
 - Working with media, marketing and promotion
 - Conflict resolution, argumentation and debate
 - Networking, diversity appreciation
 - Teambuilding and teamwork
 - Meeting management
 - Problem identification/Collaborative problem solving
 - Critical thinking/Systems thinking/Change management
 - Technological literacy/Research skills
 - Time management and organization
2. To improve self-awareness, encourage reflection, and foster a commitment to lifelong learning:
 - Personality type awareness and self assessment
 - Improve understanding of how others perceive their leadership behavior
 - Set individualized learning goals and develop a plan of action to meet them
 - Reflect on past practice, learning opportunities, and how to grow/improve
 - Develop a commitment to lifelong learning
3. To improve participants' knowledge of relevant issues facing their industry and community and enhance their sense of civic responsibility:
 - Activities help participants understand the policy development process at the local, state, federal and international levels

- Participants learn *how* the policy development process works, how it *affects* them and how to *influence* it
- Participants are challenged and *motivated* to get involved in the public policy process and community service roles
- Awareness of our "place" in a global society
- The specific issues studied in LEAD NY will vary according to the *learning needs* of participants and the *relevancy* to current industry/community challenges
- These issues provide the context in which leadership skill development is practiced, and public policy is examined
- These issues may include, but are not limited to:
 - Labor
 - Trade
 - Environment
 - Technology
 - Food safety/security
 - Land use and development
 - Ethics
 - Innovation/creativity
 - Specific agricultural sectors (e.g. dairy, equine, forestry, etc.)

Who benefits?

Many people's jobs are affected in some way, either directly or indirectly, by the state's food and agricultural system. Some examples of individuals and occupations benefitting from LEAD NY participation include: dairy producer, grape producer/winery owner, commercial fruit or vegetable grower, fresh-market fruit or vegetable grower, cash crop producer, livestock producer, organic farmer, greenhouse or nursery operator, turf-grass or sod producer, forest owner, maple producer, equine owner, breeder or trainer, food processor, consultant, educator, Farm Bureau representative, government agency representative, extension educator, food retailer, cooperative staff, insurance provider, lending officer, animal health provider, and land preservation specialist, to name a few.

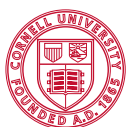
Over 300 people have completed the LEAD NY program over the past 25 years. Ninety percent of graduates are involved in agricultural or community organizations and a significant number are corporate officers, board directors, or serve in government positions. Others have applied their skills as management consultants, media advisors, or in their own entrepreneurial endeavors.

"One common theme that emerged is the constant need for change and challenging of the status quo in technology, people, ideas, and/or organizational structure. I don't think a lot of people outside of the agricultural community think of this as such a dynamic, technologically advanced industry. A passion for success, both personally and for their agriculture community, and respect for others really has been exemplified by all the leaders we have met."

Karen Barie Keouah (Class 12)

CaRDI is pleased to highlight LEAD NY this month, and we hope you will contact us to find out more about this well-established and valuable program.

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